

LAS VEGAS SUN

AUGUST 22, 1964

Inside Labor

by Victor Riesel



Crackdown on the Mafia

PALERMO, Sicily — Angry and courageous carabinieri officials here are doing what appears to be impossible back in the U.S. — cracking the murderous Mafia, known in the U.S. as the Cosa Nostra.

The carabinieri are especially irritated because our government insists on deporting Italian-born, but U.S.-bred leaders of the American crime syndicates to Italy. As an example, the police point to U.S. pressure on the Rome authorities to accept Chicago's suave, disdainful Capone era hoodlum, Paul (The Waiter) Ricca, one of the protectors of Chicago labor racketeers. The Italians ask why we dump our gangsters on their country instead of imprisoning them. The carabinieri ask privately what political influence the thugs have in their home states which keeps them out of prison.

There is the impression here that the U.S. coddles its toughest gangsters instead of battling them as Italy has done for the past 14 months in the first successful drive against the killer "Honored Society."

IN EXILE

Especially effective is an Italian law which gives the carabinieri and the courts the right to move a Mafia chief or suspect from his home here or in smaller Sicilian communities to far-off tiny villages where the Mafioso live in isolation and can be observed daily by local police.

Since last February at least 60 such secret society members have been sent more than 500 miles from their home towns. Most of them now live in Northern Italy. There they must exist on less than \$1 a day. They cannot accept gifts or receive visitors. They cannot go to bars, movie houses, public gatherings, mix with crowds, participate in local politics or meet with groups numbering more than a few persons. They must be in their quarters by nightfall and cannot leave the area without permission.

NONE TOO BIG

The carabinieri disclose that no Mafia chief is too big for their dragnet. They have even exiled the man they believe to be the don of dons, the leader of the

entire Sicilian Mafia and therefore the man who has had direct links with the American Cosa Nostra for decades. He is Giuseppe Genco Russo, who has lived under a respectable facade for years in the small Sicilian town of Mussomeli. Evidence of his Mafia link is in our Pentagon files as well as in carabinieri hands.

It is known to but a few that he was the Mafia's second in command back in July 1943 when our troops landed in Sicily. His chief then was Calogero (Don Calo) Vizzini, the leading citizen of Villalba. He headed the entire Sicilian Mafia. Therefore our military people contacted him in a successful effort to gain help in an assault on the combined Nazi and still-loyal Fascist armies. This gave Don Calo great power. When he died some years after the war, his power went secretly to Russo.

During the Don Calo-Russo reign, the Mafia murdered hundreds of Sicilians with machine-gun fire, lethal clubbings and midnight drops into abandoned mine shafts.

LAST STRAW

At least 105 policemen were killed by the Mafia, to the carabinieri's definite knowledge, between the war's end and June 30,

1963. Towards the end of that period the Mafia began using plastic bombs planted in fancy Alfa Romeo sports cars to kill its victims. Finally two such explosions in and near Palermo killed 10 police officers and the government decided to crack down.

It has. Over 1,000 Mafioso have been told privately their day of terror and control of unions is over, though they still can inflict damage. In addition to the exile treatment, the courts have been eschewing the old respect for "honor killings." Some months ago 21 Mafioso were sentenced to terms ranging from 26 years to 20 months for murder or associating with known criminals.

Just the other day, another 62 were sent to prison and exile. This show of strength by the courts here and by the police who were aroused by the murder of their colleagues has begun to crack the legendary "Omerta" — which means silence on pain of death.

THE ROUNDUP

Typical of the smashing of "Omerta" is the action of the "Black Widow"—Mrs. Serafina Battaglia - Leale. Dressed in a long black dress and a black handkerchief covering her head and most of her face, she took the witness stand to reel off name after name in vengeance against the Mafioso who killed her husband. Defying "Omerta"

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